

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY RABAT IMMEDIATE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT JIDDA 2245 ACTION SECSTATE INFO

ABU DHABI AMMAN ALGIERS BEIRUT BONN BRUSSELS CAIRO VAIHINGEN
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QTE

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BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SA

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS IN SAUDI ESTABLISHMENT AND LOCAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: ROYAL DECREES IN THE LAST TWO DAYS HAVE
GIVE SOMEWHAT NEW SHAPE TO THE SAG UNDER KING
KHALED. HE WILL REMAIN PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. CROWN PRINCE FAHD
BECAME FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND NATIONAL
GUARD COMMANDER ABDULLAH BECOMES SECOND DEPUTY
PRIME MINISTER. THE LATE KING FAISAL'S SON
SAUDI HAS BEEN NAMED MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS. KHALED HAS NEVER SHOWN MUCH INTEREST IN
AFFAIRS OF STATE AND FAHD WILL PROBABLY ASSUME MOST
OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE OF PRIME MINISTER.

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FAHD'S FORMAL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN ENHANCED, BUT THE

RELATIVE POWER OF ABDULLAH SEEMS TO HAVE REMAINED ABOUT THE SAME. THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT MAY NOW STAND AS IT IS FOR SOME MONTHS, BUT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE A GREAT DEAL OF MANEUVERING FOR POWER WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK. IN THE MEANTIME, LIFE IN THE COUNTRY IS RETURNING TO NORMAL WHILE THE GOVERNMENT EMPHASIZES CONTINUITY AND UNITY.

END SUMMARY.

1. ON MARCH 29, KING KHALED ISSUED A DECREE CONFIRMING ALL PRESENT MINISTERS IN THEIR MINISTERIAL POSTS. THE WORDING OF THE DECREE WAS SUCH AS TO ALSO CONFIRM THE KING AS PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

2. ON MARCH 29, FURTHER DECREES WERE ISSUED SLIGHTLY REORGANIZING THE GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE UNDER KHALED AS FOLLOWS:

A. CROWN PRINCE FAHD BIN ABD AL-AZIZ DESIGNATED AS FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AS WELL AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR;

B. PRINCE ABDULLAH, SECOND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AS WELL AS COMMANDER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD;

C. NAIF BIN ABD AL-AZIZ (FORMERLY VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR) TO BE MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERIOR AFFAIRS AND MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS;

D. SAUD AL-FAISAL BIN ABD AL-AZIZ (SON OF THE LATE KING AND DEPUTY MINISTER OF PETROLEUM) TO BE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS--THE POSITION LAST HELD BY THE LATE OMAR SAQQAF.

3. FAHD HAS NOW BEEN FREED FROM RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DAY-TO-DAY WORKINGS OF THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND WILL PRESUMABLY DEVOTE HIMSELF FULLY TO HIS FUNCTION AS FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. THOUGH KING KHALED RETAINS THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP,

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HIS RECORD OF INDIFFERENCE TO AFFAIRS OF STATE LEADS US TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE WILL NOT NORMALLY BE ACTIVE IN THIS CAPACITY AND THAT PRINCE FAHD WILL, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, BE THE PRIME MINISTER.

4. THOUGH FAHD'S PREEMIUM POSITION HAS NOW BEEN INSTITUTIONALIZED TO SOME EXTENT, THINGS HAVE NOT GONE ALL HIS WAY. HE IS KNOWN, FOR INSTANCE, TO

HAVE WANTED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BUT SAUD AL FAISAL'S APPOINTMENT SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT KHALED WILL RETAIN THAT POSITION AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. ABDULLAH HAS ALSO TAKEN A STEP UP THE LADDER. IT IS NOT APPARENT THAT THIS WILL NECESSARILY DETRACT FROM FAHD'S AUTHORITY, BUT ABDULLAH'S RELATIVE POWER REMAINS ABOUT THE SAME.

5. WITH THIS LATEST SERIES OF DECREES THE NEW FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE BEEN SET FOR A FEW MONTHS AT LEAST. WITHIN THIS STRUCTURE, HOWEVER, THERE IS LIKELY TO BE A GREAT DEAL OF MANEUVERING TO ENHANCE THE POSITION OF VARIOUS FACTIONS. PRINCE MOHAMMAD BIN ABD AL-AZIZ (THE KING'S OLDER FULL BROTHER) HAS, FOR INSTANCE, COME OUT OF OBSCURITY AND HAS BEEN PROMINENTLY IN THE NEWS, RECEIVING CONDOLENCE CALLS FROM GREAT NUMBERS OF CITIZENRY, AND RENOUNCED HIS OWN CLAIM TO BECOME CROWN PRINCE AT THE TIME KHALED WAS SO DESIGNATED.)

6. THE PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH OF THE SAG HAS BEEN TO EMPHASIZE CONTINUITY AND THE SOLIDARITY OF THE SAUDI FAMILY AND THE NATION. LIFE IN THE MAJOR CITIES HAS ABOUT RETURNED TO NORMAL. MINISTRIES ARE IN THEORY BACK TO WORK AGAIN. THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY (I.E. LEADING MEMBERS OF THE SAUD FAMILY) IS, HOWEVER, STILL PREOCCUPIED WITH THE ASSASSINATION AND ITS AFTERMATH. THE PRINCES ARE DAILY RECEIVING MASSES OF CALLERS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WHO HAVE COME TO OFFER CONDOLENCE AND TO PLEDGE THEIR LOYALTY TO THE NEW LEADERSHIP.

7. KING FAISAL IS BEING DESCRIBED BY SAUDI MEDIA AS A MARTYR;
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REFERENCE TO HIS MEMORY, PLUS THE PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF LOYALTY TO KING KHALID AND THE EVIDENCE OF FOREIGN SUPPORT OF THE SAUDI REGIME WILL HELP TO GET THE NEW REGIME OFF TO A GOOD PR BEGINNING WITH ITS PEOPLE AND NEIGHBORS.

8. AS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE PURPOSIVE REACTION OF THE REGIME TO THE KING'S ASSASSINATION, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT VICE MINISTER OF INTERIOR PRINCE NAYEF ALMOST IMMEDIATELY SET OFF FOR THE EASTERN PROVINCE TO ASSURE BY HIS PRESENCE THE STABILITY OF THIS IMPORTANT AND SENSITIVE PART OF THE KINGDOM. AKINS UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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